

§ 8.13

§ 8.13 Authority to downgrade or declassify.

Information originally classified by the Department may be specifically downgraded or declassified by either the official authorizing the original classification, if that official is still serving in the same position, the originator's current successor in function, a supervisory official of either, officials delegated declassification authority in writing by the Secretary, or by the Departmental Information Security Review Committee.

§ 8.15 Mandatory review for classification.

(a) All information classified by the Department of Transportation under Executive Order 12958 or predecessor orders shall be subject to a review for declassification if:

(1) The request for review describes the information with sufficient specificity to enable its location with a reasonable amount of effort; and

(2) The information has not been reviewed for declassification within the prior two years. If the information has been reviewed within the prior two years, or the information is the subject of pending litigation, the requestor will be informed of this fact, and of the Department's decision not to declassify the information and of his/her right to appeal the Department's decision not to declassify the information to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel.

(b) All information reviewed for declassification because of a mandatory review will be declassified if it does not meet the standards for classification in Executive Order 12958. The information will then be released unless withholding is otherwise authorized and warranted under applicable law.

§ 8.17 Classification challenges.

(a) Authorized holders of information classified by the Department of Transportation who, in good faith, believe that its classification status is improper are encouraged and expected to challenge the classification status of the information before the Departmental Information Security Review Committee.

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(1) No individual will be subject to retribution for bringing such a challenge; and

(2) Each individual whose challenge is denied will be advised that he/she may appeal to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel established by section 5.4 of Executive Order 12958.

(b) This classification challenge provision is not intended to prevent an authorized holder of information classified by the Department of Transportation from informally questioning the classification status of particular information. Such information inquiries should be encouraged as means to resolve classification concerns and reduce the administrative burden of formal challenges.

§ 8.19 Procedures for submitting and processing requests for classification reviews.

(a) The Director of Security and Administrative Management is hereby designated as the official to whom a member of the public or another department or agency should submit a request for a classification review of classified information produced by or under the primary cognizance of the Department. Elements of the Department that receive a request directly will immediately notify the Director.

(b) If the request for classification review involves material produced by or under the cognizance of the U.S. Coast Guard or the Federal Aviation Administration, the Director will forward the request to the headquarters security staff of the element concerned for action. If the request involves material produced by other Departmental elements, the Director will serve as the office acting on the request.

(c) The office acting on the request will:

(1) Immediately acknowledge receipt of the request and provide a copy of the correspondence to the Director. If a fee for search of records is involved pursuant to 49 CFR Part 7, the requester will be so notified;

(2) Conduct a security review, which will include consultation with the office that produced the material and with source authorities when the classification, or exemption of material